

Lessons by flashforeward

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Summary:

Some lessons Billy had to learn.

Lessons

i. questions

The first why earns you a glare. The second a smack to the back of the head. Persistence earns you a sharp backhand to the mouth and you've learned your lesson. You try not talking for awhile but that's considered *insolence* and the punishment for that is even worse, so you have to learn what you're allowed to ask and when and a long time and a lot of bruises later you finally figure it out.

ii. caring

You cared about your mom, now she's gone. You think you must have cared about your dad once, but then you started figuring out that other kids' dads didn't treat them the way your dad treats you and you tried not to care after that.

You cared about Greg down the street, your first best friend, but dad put a stop to that. *We don't mix with their type*, he said and you said *Yes, sir* because if you didn't you'd get a smack. So you said yes and you pretended not to miss Greg and you guess eventually you stopped.

You stopped caring altogether in the end because inevitably it just hurts.

iii. clothes

It doesn't matter how you dress, dad always says look queer or faggy, so you figure you'll just wear whatever and take the comments and the hits. At least if he's on your case he's paying attention to you. It hurts, but you guess it's better than nothing.

Isn't it?

iv. max

You have to break all your rules for Max. You have to care - not because the step and dad require it, but because if you don't dad'll come down on *her* and she'll *know* and you've made it this far numb and invisible and you can't let her in.

So you drop the numb and you let yourself get angry. But you can't take it out on the deserving, so you take it out on everyone else.

And you turn it on Max.

And you know it isn't fair but it feels too good to let it out and once you start you can't seem to stop because there's just so much of it.

And besides, the more trouble you can get in the longer dad will keep his attention fixed on you and Max will stay safe.

Just. Not from you.